



# **Title: A Universal Impact of War on Women with special reference to American Civil War Fiction**

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Most of the miseries of the world were caused by wars. And when the wars were over no one ever knew what they were about.

**For I am fighting for the old days, the old ways I love so much but which, I fear, are now gone forever, no matter how the die may fall. For win or lose we lose just the same.**

When Hon President Vladimir Putin says that No peace until Russia's goals in Ukraine are achieved. The intended goal of Putin is to occupy the annexed states of Ukraine that is also a form of imperialism . More states meant a bigger area of land is the only thing that is imperishable and immortal in this mortal world.

Land is a universal asset for which people live and die. These are the words of Gerald O'Hara a wealthy plantation master of Southern America who was one of the many Democrats who plunged into a Combat. The conflict was between the Agrarian South and the Industrial North. No one could hardly notice when the short-term battle turned into a Civil War that prolonged for four long years.

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The above statement is a lament of the Confederates who fought for four long years to preserve their old ways of life and social hierarchy. Large plantations and plenty of slaves to work and serve the white society was the identity of the Plantation Aristocracy of the South that was most dear to every Southerner.

She was going to say “when you haven’t the man you want, but Gerald, incensed by the cavalier way in which she treated his proffered gift, the thing which, next to Ellen, he loved best in the whole world uttered a roar.

“Do you stand there, Scarlett O’ Hara, and tell me that Tara--- that land doesn’t amount to anything?”

Scarlett nodded obstinately. Her heart was too sore to care whether or not she put her father in a temper.

“Land is the only thing in the world that amounts to anything,” he shouted, his thick, short arms making wide gestures of indignation, “for ’tis the only thing this world that lasts, and don’t you forgetting it! ‘Tis the only thing worth working for, Worth fighting for---worth dying for”( Mitchell 38-39)

Gerald pays emphasis on his legacy and he expresses pride in the fact that his Irish daughter would comprehend the fact that the only constant thing in the world is land. “Gerald was on excellent terms with all his neighbours in the County, Except the MacIntoshs whose land adjoined his on the left and the Slatterys whose meager three acres stretched on his right along the swamp bottoms between the river and the John Wilkes’ plantation”

The war is a catastrophe driven by power and politics of a country or a group of countries. It is a mega event that affects women and children up to a large extent. Each and every war has forced the women and children to come out of their protective shells and shoulder the responsibility of the house and hearth.

A war torn society like Russia, Ukraine feel the same pain that Civil War torn America had ever experienced. The deserted economy of the war-ridden nation is best presented in some of the best novels: *Gone with the Wind* written by Margaret Mitchell, And Donald Mac Caig’s *Jacob’s Ladder*

In the first historical Mammoth work Scarlett O'Hara is a Universal Pillar for each and every woman of a war-ridden country. War is something that ushers a massive change and this massive change that encompasses everything including social, Political and cultural norms of society. The Novelist who has a proslavery bent of mind depicts that a young fairy girl who is living in her dream-world is wholly a stranger to the cause and effects of the decision of Secession the Southern States. However, Scarlett and her family realized the harsh reality of war when month by month passed and it took a gigantic form that seemed to be a never ending deadly struggle. The novel portrays a world that is full of lush greenery and liveliness and all its life blood is sucked when the war spreads its venomous tentacles to control every smile and joy of life.

The young people who were lost in balls and banquets were also shocked to face the ghastly realities of war that started them in the face. The impact of war surrounded life like a dark shadow that hovered around every breath of society.

When the novel starts Scarlett is shown preparing for a Barbecue the next day at neighboring Twelve Oaks, the Wilkes' plantation down the road from Tara. She is obsessively in love with Ashley Wilkes and gets anxious to know about his engagement with Melanie. She asks her father Gerald O'Hara if the gossip Mammy, her slave, had told her is true. Gerald confirms her doubts and tries to make her understand that Ashley is not a deserving man for her but nothing consoles her and she is terribly upset.

Scarlett possesses the power of determination and to hurt Ashley she marries Charles Hamilton, whose sister Melaine is to be married to Ashley. Like all other young men of Georgia, Charles also joins the war and dies of the measles.

Early Widowhood is the common haunting outcome of every war and the

Russia and Ukraine have also been inflicting the same wound on the memory of women and children.

Scarlett O'Hara is the life-like character that inspires 21st century women to fling the depression of widowhood and look forward to the future. She used to be a thoughtless childish and romantic young girl who marries as a vengeance on her first love Ashley Wilkes and the war forces this young girl to face a dark life under the shadows of Widowhood. the customs and social norms are altogether contrary to her mood and mentality.

Here it is her Mother who asks her to go to Atlanta to relieve herself from the burden and she allows her to have a change. This frank approach is the need of every war-ridden country so that women could breathe and live under adversity.

Female Pragmatism and far-sightedness : Every War causes the absence of male members in the family who are the decision-makers. During the Great American Civil Mitchell Portrays a critical situation where Scarlett is left alone after her parents and husband's death.

Hardships make or break people. She has a long voyage to go all alone wherein she needs power and the war-torn economy has already robbed the wealthiest families. Under such circumstances Scarlett decides to pounce upon the idea of marrying her younger sister's fiancé Charles Kennedy who has got a sound business to support her household. Encroaching on the love of her sisters, she does not feel guilty as Sullen lacks the caliber to run the household of O'Haras'. This proves the failure of women with a traditional bent of mind because 21st century Russia, Ukraine or America of 1861 depicts the counterfeiting challenges before women that also give them a chance to break the shell of the social stigma.

When Scarlett marries for the second time and marries her real sisters' fiancée she proves the demand of the situation that is to survive under the war that is always a big problem. She is an universal epitome of the Common Sense and practical wisdom of the woman who has to shower love and compassion on her family as well as she has to defend the family assets from the ravages of war.

Scarlett's Marriage with Rhett Butler: Every war is a grim stare in the face of humanity. Rhett is an apt male counterpart of Scarlett who manipulates every war adversity for her financial gain and proves a winner under such an odd situation where many collapse and become a part of the defeat.

“ I love you Scarlett because we are so much alike, renegades, both of us , dear and selfish rascals. Neither of us cares a rap if the whole world goes to pot. So long as we are safe and comfortable”

The above statement of Rhett Butler who is the real hero of the novel proves that practical wisdom and acumen are the key to success for a woman when they are left in the lurch to face the hazard of war. The ordeal of war made her

an opportunist like Rhett and she married and remarried to pave the way towards a secure niche that was the sole target of a woman being the head of the family.

“Yes, as Rhett had prophesied, marriage could be a lot of fun. Not only fun but she was learning many things that was odd in itself. Because Scarlett had thought life could teach her no more. Now she felt like a child, every day on the brink of a new discovery”.

Gradually death of mother, her first husband, and that of her father taught her a lesson to stay calm and composed the odds of life that were a challenge for her because except her none of her sisters had the capability to preserve and protect Tara that was more than life to the O’Haras. Thus Scarlett realizes, “It was better to know than to wonder..Burdens are for the shoulders strong enough to carry them.”

After all, tomorrow is another day. With enough courage you can do without a reputation.

Donald Mac Caig’s novel *Jacob’s Ladder* also takes us on a voyage of the toughest sights of war-torn society where we come across the Duncan and Midge love affair and its consequences.

The Novel presents the harsh reality that many plantation masters plunged into war to defend the social hierarchy of slave and master. The slave master was an inter-racial relationship that fostered a sense of security and mutual faith between two different races. In the novel *The proslavery planter Samuel Gatewood* is not as much concerned about the love affair of his son Duncan and a quadroon slave girl Midge as he is about the social hierarchy of the plantation society. When he comes to know about Midge’s pregnancy, he simply arranges her marriage with a slave Jesse, so that his slave infant’s could be fathered by a slave. Here Samuel Gatewood says:

Jack, most Virginians would have resolved this differently by selling the girl south—a solution, I believe, that would be more approved than the one I have elected. Instead, at some inconvenience, I have provided Midge a fine husband of her own race, a good man who adores her. Jesse will take her as she is sullied bearing another’s child. Jack, If Midge will not lie with Jesse, she will sleep tomorrow night in the slave pen behind the Wayne Tavern in

Staunton where at auction I will sell her to Silas Omohundru or any other speculator who can meet my price. In my honor , I swear It. ( McCaig 44)

The above statement presents two different motives to risk a war: Unlike Gerald O’Hara Samuel Gatewood sells the slave girl South and his only son Duncan is packed off to a Military School. In the Novel

Mac Caig depicts the obsession for which plantation masters waged the great American Civil Strife

Samuel Gatewood pulled on an overturned washtub beside the rocker and put his hand towards the dying fire. “Me. Kirkpatrick’ you were not born in Virginia?

You came to us from the North?”

“Sir, you are not native here and can not understand our ways. Please indulge me when I assure you that customs which may to the naive eye appear harsh are necessary for the management of our domestic institutions . Men as wise as Jefferson, Calhoun, and Clay have contributed to our debate. (Mc Caig 83)

Here the conservative approach of the Proslavery Southern America is revealed . The novelist depicts that an agrarian economy and social hierarchy both were the dominant reasons to wage a war that devoured a number of young men and women.

In McCaig’s *Jacob’s Ladder* we meet Uther Botkin, who is a pious and treats his slaves with kindness but his neighbor Samuel Gatewood is relatively a stern statesman Uther Botkin is also a part of plantation society but he depicts a connection between the slave and the master. On the contrary Samuel Gatewood had seen slavery closely and for him slavery is a system to guide and govern an inferior race, which never deserves a treatment of equality. He is also an ancient frame of mind as we find in the disposition of St. Clare’s father. Samuel said, “You will have heard of Duncan’s grandfather, Thomas Gatewood.” The most venerable local scandals reliably produced headshaking at every heart in the country, Uther’s silence was as close to a polite lie as the old schoolmaster could manage. He further says , “ Like my son, my father loved ladies “ (39).



Samuel's views express past grudges, immoral and illicit conduct of his father. He is a man of tradition that is the reason he practices slavery but he can not afford any transgression of a slave girl into his family.

The historical and descriptive research paper throws light on the mania and Fantasy that fuel the motive of war. Margaret Mitchell and Donald MAcCaig both portray a war torn society that could never presume the number of deaths and duration of war that swallowed all the peace and prosperity of their life.

Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* and Samuel Gatewood in the *Jacob's Ladder* symbolize the struggle that is faced by the countrymen away from the battle-field. The prompt adaptability and resolution of the protagonists unveils the harsh reality that war is an urgency that put the life at the stake of Uncertainty. The uncertainty of life, wealth and future creates a Psychological Commotion or the Stream of Consciousness that pulls the mind back into the peaceful past that lives only in the memory of the people.

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